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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [TW](#) [CH](#)
SUBJECT: TAIWAN RESEARCHER: PRC PUTTING BRAKES ON ACADEMIC
"INTERNATIONAL SPACE" DISCUSSIONS

Classified By: The Director for reasons 1.4(b/d)

¶1. (C) Summary. At least five PRC academic delegations planning travel to Taiwan in recent weeks to discuss Taiwan's "international space" and related issues have been cancelled, presumably by Chinese authorities, according to a researcher at a Taiwan government-funded think tank. Beijing likely is trying to avoid sending mixed signals as it works to develop an internal consensus on how to proceed with cross-Strait ties. If the PRC is, indeed, attempting to limit academic discussions of sensitive cross-Strait issues, it would mark a significant shift in what has been a robust "track two" conversation. However, with Taiwan scholars continuing to travel to the mainland, whatever limits there are on PRC scholars' travel do not appear to have stopped a vigorous academic dialogue. End Summary.

¶2. (C) The Chinese government appears to be trying to limit cross-Strait academic discussions of Taiwan's "international space," Yen Chen-shen (protect), a researcher at the Taiwan government-funded Institute of International Relations (IIR) told poloffs December 11. Since mid-November, at least five PRC academic delegations planning to visit Taiwan to discuss the issue have been cancelled. His own institute had been affected, Yen said, with a three-person delegation comprised of two Beijing University scholars, including Jia Qingguo, and a professor from Shanghai's Fudan University pulling out of a November 27 IIR conference at which they were the headline attraction only days before the event. Yen noted that visits by mainland scholars looking at less sensitive subjects and travel to the PRC by Taiwan scholars appear to be unaffected.

¶3. (C) The rash of cancellations may be a sign that Beijing is trying to develop an internal consensus on how to respond to President Ma's push to expand Taiwan's international space and meanwhile wants to avoid sending mixed messages to Taipei and elsewhere, Yen speculated. In earlier conversations, Yen said, mainland scholars expressed doubts about the prospects for a significant PRC concession at the May 2009 WHA assembly meeting, since, if China "gave Ma a present" in 2009, there would be unrealistic expectations for further, faster progress in the future. Yen agreed with the PRC scholars' assessment that Beijing is likely to shy away from any significant steps until the end of Ma's four-year term, when progress on cross-Strait issues could be expected to bolster his chances in the 2012 election and, more importantly, damage those of the DPP candidate.

¶4. (C) Comment. If the PRC is, indeed, trying to limit discussions of sensitive cross-Strait subjects, it would mark a significant change in what has been a robust dialogue. Through the fall, local contacts have noted a remarkable number of scholarly exchange across the Taiwan Strait to discuss issues including President Ma's "diplomatic truce"

proposal, prospects for Taiwan's WHO observership bid and the possibility of a cross-Strait peace agreement. For now, any restrictions on travel appear to be at most one-way. We know of numerous Taiwan scholars who have traveled to the mainland recently, including at least one scholar with close ties to the Ma administration visiting Shanghai to discuss "international space" in the past week.

SYOUNG